

REMARKS

Upon entry of the claim amendments, Claims 2-8, 10-25, 27-28, and 30-45 will be all the claims pending in the application.

An excess claim fee payment and payment letter have been submitted herewith.

Claims 1, 9, 26 and 29 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Accordingly, the §112, second paragraph, rejection of Claim 26 has been rendered moot. The §103(a) rejection of Claims 1 and 9 has also been rendered moot.

Claims 2-5, 15-16, 18, 23, and 25 have been amended to depend from independent Claim 17. Claims 6-7 and 10 indirectly depend from Claim 17. Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claim 17 is allowed at Section No. 9, page 3, of the Office Action mailed October 23rd. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the §103(a) rejection of Claims 1-3, 5-7, 9-10 and 16.

The subject matter of Claims 9 and 26 has been incorporated into Claim 6. Claim 28 has been amended consistent with the amendment to Claim 6. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the §112, second paragraph, rejection of Claim 6.

The subject matter of Claim 29 has been incorporated into Claim 11. Claim 12 has been amended consistent with the amendment to Claim 11. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the §112, second paragraph, rejection of Claim 11.

New Claim 32 is original Claim 4 rewritten in independent form. Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claim 4 contains allowable subject matter at Section No. 8, page 3, of the Office Action mailed October 23rd.

New Claims 33 and 34 are original Claims 13 and 14, respectively, rewritten to depend from new Claim 32. Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claims 13 and 14 contain allowable subject matter at Section No. 8, page 3, of the Office Action mailed October 23rd.

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New Claim 35 is original Claim 15 rewritten in independent form. Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claim 15 contains allowable subject matter at Section No. 8, page 3, of the Office Action mailed October 23rd.

New Claim 36 is previously presented Claim 18 rewritten in independent form. Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claim 18 contains allowable subject matter at Section No. 8, page 3, of the Office Action mailed October 23rd.

New Claims 37-40 are original Claims 19-22, respectively, rewritten to depend from new Claim 36. Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claims 19-22 contain allowable subject matter at Section No. 8, page 3, of the Office Action mailed October 23rd.

New Claim 41 is previously presented Claim 23 rewritten in independent form. Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claim 23 contains allowable subject matter at Section No. 8, page 3, of the Office Action mailed October 23rd.

New Claims 42-43 are original Claim 24 and previously presented Claim 30, respectively, rewritten to depend from new Claim 41. Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claims 24 and 30 contain allowable subject matter at Section No. 8, page 3, of the Office Action mailed October 23rd.

New Claim 44 is previously presented Claim 25 rewritten in independent form. Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claim 25 contains allowable subject matter at Section No. 8, page 3, of the Office Action mailed October 23rd.

Finally, new Claim 45 is previously presented Claim 31 rewritten to depend from new Claim 44. Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claim 31 contains allowable subject matter at Section No. 8, page 3, of the Office Action mailed October 23rd.

No new matter has been added.

Reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be

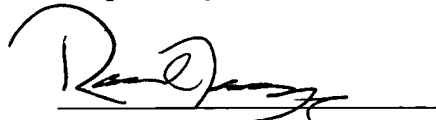
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best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, he is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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WASHINGTON OFFICE

23373

CUSTOMER NUMBER

Date: February 23, 2004